

Letters To The Editor

S.G.P.C. ELECTION AND ALL INDIA RADIO

Sir, The S.G.P.C. has been aptly described in certain sections of the press as the "Religious Parliament of Sikhs"—their "Lok Sabha". Yet the election to the organisation, which has been the bedrock of Punjab politics since 1925 when it was created by a Central law, received scant attention from All India Radio. According to an official statement, only four or five lines (less than half a minute) were devoted to it in most A.I.R. news bulletins, including those in Punjabi. Only on two occasions were 35 lines (two minutes) broadcast, and these did not contain the election results. On April 3 only 2-1/2 minutes of the bulletin time was devoted to the results (then incomplete since they covered 107 out of the 140 seats) in the Hindi and Punjabi bulletins. There is no record of the results having been broadcast in English on the national hook-up. If 15 million Sikhs and 50 million or more Punjabis all over India were deprived of information on a subject of vital interest to them, can it not be described as "callousness"?

On an average, A.I.R. devoted 90 minutes out of its daily programmes to news in English and Hindi in national bulletins. During about 28 hours of news broadcasts spread over 19 days—from March 16 to April 3—A.I.R. allocated only 31 lines to the S.G.P.C. elections (a total of 139 lines in all the bulletins). This is a near-blackout.

No matter how many professionals are employed in the News Services Division of A.I.R., bureaucratic and Ministerial imposition and interference will always ensure priority to "Ministerial birthdays and basket-making". The News Services Division must have norms about leaving out birthday news, and basket-making should be included in Doordarshan features rather than in news, if at all. Hard news deserves the first priority, otherwise the Emergency style will remain. I doubt if any special 10-minute round-up on the S.G.P.C. election results in English (in the national hook-up), Hindi or Punjabi, and brief ones in other regional languages was broadcast to give information to the people directly concerned and to others about the election results to enable them to know our India and promote national integration.

According to information supplied by the Director of

News Services, brief news items about the S.G.P.C. elections were broadcast in the Punjabi bulletin from Delhi which is not audible in other parts of the country, such as Calcutta, Patna, Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras and Bangalore. But A.I.R. did not give a complete picture of the election. No mention was made about the filing of nomination papers, election, campaigns, the propaganda planks of the contesting parties and the manifestoes.

A.I.R. made the least effort to acquaint the younger generation about the significance of the election which was held after 16 years. No special bulletins were arranged at short intervals on the day the results were announced. There was no mention of the S.G.P.C. election results from Akashvani, Simla, though the election was also held in Himachal Pradesh. The Rohtak station only relays news from Chandigarh.

The news item broadcast on April 2 was not about the S.G.P.C. election but about Mr. Jiwan Singh Umrangal

rejoining the Cabinet after winning the election. A brief news item on April 3 in the Punjabi bulletin of Delhi station at 7-30 p.m. said that the Shiromani Akali Dal had emerged as the largest single party in the gurdwara election. On April 3 the Hindi and English bulletins carried only two or three lines about the results.

More than 40 lakh Sikhs voted to elect 140 members of the supreme Sikh religious body. The election was held under Government supervision and was contested by more than 450 candidates in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

—Balwant Singh Ramoowalia,
New Delhi M.P.

Cow Slaughter Ban

Sir, The ban on cow slaughter has to be viewed both from economic as well as religious angles.

Mr. Nirmal Anand's mention in the recent issue of Hindustan Times, New Delhi, that the animal slaughter, in fact, augments the coffers of the trade rising out of consumption of alien beef eaters rather than Indian Muslims and Christians has a weight. The indiscriminate animal slaughter

in all the abattoirs of the country with the compromise of the law enforcement authorities needs no emphasis.

His further assertion that cow slaughter was banned in Mughal days is correct. It was not only cow killing but it was partial total animal killing during Akbar and Jehangir's regime, as evident from the pen of Emperor Jehangir written by himself in his "Memoirs of the Emperor Jehangir" and translated from a Persian manuscript by Major Davis Prince in 1904 A.D.

Jehangir writes on page 13 that "the use of animal food was prohibited both in town and country and at equidistant periods throughout the year a day was set apart on which all slaughtering of animals was strictly forbidden. In every week also, on Thursdays, that being the day of my accession; and Sundays; was forbidden the use of animal food; it being considered unjustifiable to deprive any animal of life on that day on which the creation of the world was finished. For a period for more than eleven years was the same abstinence observed by my father during which on no consideration would he permit himself to taste the animal food on a Sunday. On that day, therefore, I thought it right to prohibit the use of such food in every place throughout my dominion."

On page 105 Jehangir further adds that "Akbar did not keep fast in the month of Ramzan but at the conclusion of festival he would without fail go to the Eidgah and observe prayers with solemnity. For three months in the year, he never tasted animal food and for the month in which he was born, he strictly forbade depriving any animal of life."

It will thus be observed that for almost all for nearly five months in a year there was a total ban on animal killing and more animal life was saved comparatively during Muslim despotism. The present greed for animal food and epicureanism

are the legacy of the British rule and ban at least, on the cow and its progeny slaughter merit serious consideration, though eschewing all faddism, of the government and other social and humanitarian organisations.

—Gyani Brahma Singh

Ajmer

Sikh Bloodshed In Vain

Sir,—Sikh leadership' demand from another country to grant "Vatican Status" to Nankana Sahib makes an interesting reading.

While here even during their honeymoon period (when nothing is denied) with these strange bed fellows just a permission to broadcast God's word to God's world, could not be had. So much Sikh blood has been shed for them—in vain I can say.

—Bhai Ashok Singh

Bagrian

Sikh English Daily

Sir, A Sikh English Daily has been my dream, as well, since even before I thought of a Sikh Public School.

But I do not think the project is beyond the capacity of the Panth. All that is needed is concerted thinking, concerted effort. These we unfortunately lack in so many fields of our activities.

If a trust of selfless, devoted Gur Sikhs who have risen above ego and who have earned the faith of the Panth, could be formed, what miracles cannot be wrought through it. Even academic capability for this kind of a job is not wanting.

I stand no where. Nevertheless, if I can be of any service in this connection, nothing could be more fortunate for me. Only I will have to synchronise my activities with my longing to see Guru Nanak Academy, Dehra Dun reach its top before I breathe my last.

—Gyani Gurbachan Singh
Dehradun

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